

**Statement of Ben Nighthorse Campbell**  
**Chairman, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs**  
**Hearing on *The Native American Education Improvement Act of 2001* (S.211)**

**March 14, 2001**

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The Committee will now turn to the legislative hearing on S.211, the "Native American Education Improvement Act of 2001". Joined by Senator Inouye, I was proud to introduce this bill to improve Indian education and help Native youngsters be competitive and make their way in a difficult and often harsh world.

This is indeed a timely hearing because last week the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions ("HELP") Committee marked up the President's legislation to amend the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and it is expected on the Senate floor very shortly.

S.211 contains two titles: Title I seeks to amend the *Indian Education Amendments of 1978* related to BIA Schools; and Title II seeks to amend the *Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988*.

As the only Member of the Senate who lives within an Indian reservation and as a former teacher, I know all-too-well the problems faced by Native youth. I feel strongly that in America education holds the key to individual achievement, the development of Native communities, and real Indian Self Determination.

Like the President's prescription for improving schools, S.211 relies on local control and flexibility to develop education programs, and continues the trend toward increasing Tribal contracting of federal services.

As Congress has done in other areas such as Indian employment training this bill would authorize the coordination of existing programs *provided* that integration brings greater efficiency and improve the services to Indian people.

The \$1 billion Indian School Construction backlog continues to be a problem. The President has committed to eliminating the backlog entirely by FY2006, but I continue to support creative solutions such as the School Bonding Bill introduced by Sen. Tim Johnson, which I co-sponsor.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning.

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